



City of Rockford
Neighborhood Facade
Improvement Program
5 Easy Steps to Progress

Administered by
The City of Rockford Community & Economic Development Department
Economic Development Division
(779)348-7162

The Rockford Neighborhood Façade Improvement Program is designed to help you make the facade improvements you want as easily as possible. We want your completed construction project to be appealing, efficient and cost effective. The five steps outlined below are your guide to a profitable experience and reflect our commitment to quality customer service.

This program offers assistance of up to \$25,000 in a one-for-one match for exterior improvements to a commercial building within the geographic boundaries of the area.

The program boundaries will include designated areas in the Downtown Corridor, South Main Corridor and N. Main & Auburn Corridor.

Program Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible to participate in the program, projects must meet the following requirements:

- a. Must be a commercial property, properly zoned;
- b. Must be current with property taxes and have no liens with the City;
- c. Must have no outstanding code violations;
- d. Must be current on payment on any loans that may have been received from the City under other programs; and
- e. Must meet all State and local building, accessibility and zoning codes.

Eligible Improvements

All projects must be visible from the public right-of-way (street and/or the Rock River). The following types of projects will be eligible under the program:

- a. Window/door repair or replacement;
- b. Storefront rehab;
- c. Professional cleaning/repairing of exterior surfaces;
- d. Exterior painting or tuckpointing;
- e. Stucco refacing when appropriate;
- f. Repairing/restoring architectural detailing;
- g. New awnings, shutters or canopies (including removal of old ones);
- h. New signage, when in conjunction with other improvements, or restoration of historic signage;
- i. Exterior lighting that will enhance the building's appearance and/or safety;
- j. Entryway improvements; and/or
- k. Repairing/replacing cornices or parapet walls.

In addition, the program may pay for certain soft costs such as architectural fees and permit fees.

Non-eligible projects

Because our focus is on making improvements visible to the public and on retaining as much historic character of the buildings as possible, the program will not pay for the following types of improvements:

- a. Anything relating strictly to the interior, such as mechanical systems, sprinklers, furniture or equipment;
- b. Sandblasting;
- c. Roof repair or replacement;
- d. Building security system;
- e. Extermination of pests;

- f. Maintenance or financing of ongoing improvements;
- g. Removal of architecturally significant features;
- h. Property acquisition;
- i. Any activity completed before fully executing an agreement with the City;
- j. Work on a roof, rear or alley facade, or a secondary facade not plainly visible from the main commercial street;
- k. New construction or additions;
- l. Profits and overhead if the applicant is also the contractor or supplier; or
- m. Sidewalk improvements.

These are the basic requirements for the program. The steps you need to follow to apply for and receive assistance are described in the following pages. If you have any questions, please call (779) 348-7162.

APPLICATION

Complete and submit the attached application with exhibits.

Your application will be reviewed by staff in the City of Rockford's Economic Development Division to determine the eligibility of your proposed improvements. Applications will be accepted on a first-come, first serve basis and as long as funding is available.

Eligibility is met when:

- a. The proposed project is located in the within the program boundaries defined above and meets the program eligibility requirements listed above;
- b. The proposed changes are in keeping with design standards established in RNFP *Design Guidelines* (see Appendix A); and
- c. The property is current with all tax bills and without City of Rockford liens at the time of application, approval and completions, and as a condition of the final payment.

If the project is eligible, the City will temporarily reserve funds for the project for a period of six months. ***Please note that any costs you incur prior to the actual formal approval of a project will not be reimbursable with the exception of certain soft costs such as design/architectural fees and permit fees.*** The City will contact you to arrange a meeting to discuss the program requirements with you and answer any questions you might have.

Other program requirements include:

- a. Applicant must obtain all required permits and approvals.
- b. Applicant must obtain and submit bid/proposal for the work to be completed.
- c. Applicant must schedule appropriate inspections by City staff at the time of payment.

- d. The project must be completed within 6 months of the grant award or according to the time table outlined in the agreement. Extensions may be considered.
- e. Changes to the project must be approved by the City before they are made.



PLANNING & DESIGN

Prepare detailed drawings of your plans.

After you have received conditional approval from the City for your project, you can contract the services of your own designer to produce elevation drawings detailing the work you intend to do. As part of this phase of the process, you may include samples and product literature of color schemes and proposed new materials. Sometimes this step may involve more than one draft of your plans to ensure that renovations will be in keeping with City guidelines. A formal letter of approval for the project will be granted following your presentation of acceptable plans to the City staff, and the completion of an environmental review by staff. This letter will be accompanied by an agreement outlining the terms and conditions of the receipt of your rebate, which must be signed and returned. Construction should commence within one month of this agreement.



APPROVAL

Submit your plans for formal permitting approval.

As with any building project in the City, building permits and site plan approval are required. Once your detailed drawings are conditionally approved for the project, submit one copy to the Community & Economic Development Department, Economic Development Division (City Hall 2nd floor) and one copy to Construction & Development Services (City Hall 1st floor) where technical approval can take place.

Be aware that some projects may require additional permits and review. If your building has been designated by the City of Rockford as a local landmark or as part of a local historic district, you must obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness for your project from the Rockford Historic Preservation Commission before any other permits can be issued. Projects that extend into or over the public right-of-way (primarily certain types of signs) may require a permit from the Department of Public Works.

Project approval does not guarantee final permit approval. In an effort to streamline the review of your designs, however, Economic Development Staff will draw your attention to issues that may arise in the formal approval process so that modifications can be made ahead of time.



CONSTRUCTION

Select a contractor to do the work!

Once the scope of work and design has been approved, select a contractor to complete the work. The construction agreement(s) will be between the firm(s) selected and the owner.

By law, we must enforce Davis Bacon prevailing wage regulations and fair labor standards. To obtain those rates, contact the City's Legal Department at (779)348-7396. You should be certain that the bidding firms understand and have agreed to comply with the applicable federal requirements. We will meet with your contractor to clarify these rules and will be available to answer their questions throughout the process. A contract should be executed within one month of formal approval, and a copy of the executed agreement forwarded to the City. During construction, Economic Development staff will monitor the project to ensure compliance. We generally require that construction be completed within 6 months of the date the agreement is executed.



PAYMENT

Submit all invoices and contracts or paid receipts and lien waivers for payment.

After you have notified us that the project is complete and you have submitted the necessary documentation, City staff will inspect the building to certify that work is completed as agreed upon. Copies of all contracts, cancelled checks issued as payment, final waivers of lien and Construction Services Division final-inspection approval should be submitted to the Economic Development staff for verification. Upon review and approval, a check will be processed and made available approximately two weeks after verification. The City payment amount is computed at 50% of the actual cost incurred for labor, material, and architectural design services, up to the maximum amount allowed for your building (\$25,000 per building).

For further information, contact

Rockford Department of Community & Economic Development
Economic Development Division
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(779)348-7162